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health officers and other sanitarians, weekly abstracts of the consular sanitary reports and other pertinent information received by him, and shall also, as far as he may be able, by means of voluntary coöperation of State and Territorial health authorities, and through them, municipal health authorities, public associations, and private persons, procure information relating to the climatic and other conditions affecting the public health.

SEC. 7. That a special report of the said commission of public health, relative to such action as will most effectually protect and promote the health of the people of the United States, may at any time be required by the President of the United States.

SEC. 8. That the commission shall co-operate with State, municipal, and local boards of health in establishing and maintaining an efficient and accurate system of notification of the existence and progress of contagious or infectious diseases, and of vital statistics in the United States.

#### CURRENT NOTES ON ANTHROPOLOGY.

##### CAN SEX BE DISTINGUISHED IN SKULLS?

ENTHUSIASTIC osteologists frequently assert that they can distinguish the sex by an examination of the skull. It is possible, when one is familiar with many skulls, from the same stock and geographically limited to narrow bounds, that this can often be accomplished. But in general it is not possible. There is no sex-criterion in the skull.

In an inaugural dissertation, published in Berlin last year, and noticed in the *Centralblatt für Anthropologie*, January, 1898, Dr. Paul Bartels submitted the question to a new and searching examination, founded on 1,090 skulls—685 male and 405 female. He could discover no positive characteristic of sex. The fossa-typanico-stylo-mastoidea, of which much has been made, he shows to be inconclusive; and the same is true of every

other trait which has been advanced as a determination of sex.

##### THE EARLIEST ITALIANS.

ONE of the numbers of the 'Piccola Biblioteca delle Scienze Moderne,' published by the Brothers Bocca, at Turin, is a treatise by Professor Sergi on the earliest inhabitants of Italy (*Arii e Italici*, pp. 229, illustrated).

The author's theory may be briefly stated. The oldest tribes on the peninsula, the Pelasgians and Ligurians, belonged to the 'Mediterranean' stock, which at a remote date moved northward from equatorial Africa. The Aryans entered much later, coming from the north, and originally from Asia, bringing with them the Umbrian, Oscan and other Indo-European dialects. The Etruscans, of unknown affinities, but members of the 'Mediterranean' stock, entered by sea, on the west coast, about 800 B. C., arriving from the eastern Mediterranean shores.

The author bases most of his argument on cranial forms, but also discusses with some detail the archæologic evidence, and slightly that derived from language. It is unnecessary to point out how many obstacles present themselves to such a solution of this intricate question.

D. G. BRINTON.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

#### NOTES ON INORGANIC CHEMISTRY.

THE *Chemical News* published two papers by Professor William Ramsay and Dr. Morris W. Travers before the Royal Society on January 20th. The first is on the homogeneity of helium. In a previous paper recently noticed in this column an account was given of an attempt to separate argon and helium into two portions of different densities, by diffusion through pipe clay. These experiments showed that while it did